



## **Medical Expenditure Panel Survey**

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### **DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION AND DATA PRODUCTS**



## **Medical Expenditure Panel Survey Methods of Dissemination**

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- **MEPS Web site at**  
**[www.meps.ahrq.gov](http://www.meps.ahrq.gov)**
- **MEPS e-mail address**  
**[mepspd@ahrq.gov](mailto:mepspd@ahrq.gov)**
- **AHRQ Clearinghouse**
  - **for CD-ROMs and print publications**
  - **Call 1-800-358-9295**

The primary method of MEPS data dissemination is via the MEPS Web site:  
[www.meps.ahrq.gov](http://www.meps.ahrq.gov).

Selected data products can be ordered free of charge from the AHRQ Clearinghouse. Availability and ordering information can be found on the Web site.

For technical assistance, you can send an e-mail to the MEPSPD mailbox on the Web site and a staff member will get back to you within 24 hours.



This is a screen shot of the MEPS home page that is located at [www.meps.ahrq.gov](http://www.meps.ahrq.gov).



## **MEPS Web Site**

### **www.meps.ahrq.gov**

- **Overview of MEPS and frequently asked questions (FAQs)**
- **Staff reports using MEPS**
  - **Findings/Statistical Briefs/Chartbooks**
- **Data tables of estimates**
- **Public use files (microdata)**
- **MEPSnet interactive query tool**
- **Survey Methodology Reports**
- **Survey questionnaires and other collection materials**
- **Data product availability and ordering information**
- **MEPS data workshop information and schedule**
- **Mailing list and list server**
- **Data Center information**

Besides being the primary source of MEPS public use data files, the Web site contains useful background information on the MEPS, electronic versions of publications, information on the on-site data center, copies of survey instruments, and MEPSnet--an interactive query tool.

The Web site also allows users to subscribe to mailing lists and e-mail notifications of new data products and publications availability.

Researchers are invited to sign up to participate in the MEPS list serve. It is a moderated forum designed to facilitate free exchange of ideas and information about MEPS. Currently, over 400 data users have subscribed.

Periodically, MEPS user workshops are conducted. The Web site contains information on planned workshops and enrollment information.



## **MEPS Print and Data Products**

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- **Publications**
  - **Statistical Briefs**
  - **Chartbooks**
  - **Findings**
- **Data tables**
- **MEPSnet interactive query tool**
- **microdata files**
  - **Public use files**
  - **Restricted access files – AHRQ/CFACT Data Center**
- **Questionnaires and Methods Reports**



## MEPS Publications

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- **Statistical Briefs and Highlights**: easy-to-read, graphical summaries of MEPS data
- **Chartbooks**: policy-sensitive print publications organized in the question and answer format
- **Research Findings**: tables of descriptive statistics from MEPS and corresponding summaries
- **Methodology Reports**: documentation of sample design and survey methods

MEPS data are disseminated in a variety of publications:

**Statistical Briefs and Highlights** are easy-to-read, quick, graphical summaries of MEPS data. Statistical Briefs are only available on the MEPS Web site.

**Chartbooks** are policy-sensitive publications organized in a question- and-answer format. These publications are intended for an advocacy and policy-making audience as well as the general public.

**Research Findings** provide tables of basic descriptive statistics from the MEPS data with limited accompanying text. Some Research Findings have corresponding Highlights.

**Methodology Reports** are used to describe the sample design and survey methods used in the various MEPS components. They provide information on the objectives, instruments, and procedures for data collection, as well as technical explanations of selecting sample sizes, response rates, and sampling weights.



## Other Publications

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- **Working Papers:** works in progress by AHRQ staff
- **AHRQ's Research in Action**
- **Publications cited** but not on the MEPS Web site:
  - Articles in professional journals
  - Reports
  - Conference proceedings

**Working Papers** provide preliminary analyses of substantive, technical, and methodological issues. The papers are works in progress and have not undergone a formal external peer review. They are distributed in this format to share valuable experience and research in a timely manner. Comments are welcome and should be directed to the authors.

**AHRQ's Research in Action** synthesizes and interprets findings from AHRQ-sponsored studies to show how research results can be used in meaningful ways to improve health care.

**Articles in professional journals** are papers published in peer-reviewed journals that are based on MEPS data and authored by CFACT staff. Reference citations for these articles are provided; the articles are not available on the MEPS Web site.

**Reports** are a list of reference citations for coverage of MEPS in reports (bulletins, issue briefs, data profiles, newsletters, etc.). The bulletins, issue briefs, etc., are not available on the MEPS Web site.

**Conference proceedings** are a list of reference citations for coverage of MEPS in conference proceedings. The proceedings are not available on the MEPS Web site.



## MEPSnet Interactive Query Tool

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- **An online interactive statistical computer system**
- **Provides immediate access to data in a non-programming menu driven environment**
- **MEPSnet is a set of statistical tools**
  - **MEPSnet/HC – Person-level health expenditure estimates**
  - **MEPSnet/IC – Employer-based health insurance estimates**

The **MEPSnet/HC** operates on data from the full-year public use files. Users can generate nationally representative estimates of health insurance coverage and health care use and expenditure estimates for various subpopulations of interest.

MEPSnet/HC offers a wide variety of variables to use and provides documentation and frequency information for each variable.

Appropriate standard errors are also generated to facilitate comparative analysis.

The **MEPSnet/IC** operates on data from the MEPS Insurance Component List Sample. Users can generate establishment-level data and employee-level estimates of health insurance premiums by state, size of establishment, and other establishment characteristics of interest. In addition to performing analyses, users can generate graphs that track changes over time.





## Microdata Files

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- **Public use files (microdata) – Available for downloading from Web site (Household Survey only)**
- **Restricted access files (microdata)**
  - **MEPS-HC – Available for use at AHRQ/CFACT Data Center**
  - **MEPS-IC**
    - **Available for use at Census Research Data Centers**
    - **For more information go to [www.ces.census.gov](http://www.ces.census.gov)**

All of the MEPS-HC public use data files are available for downloading from the MEPS Web site as ASCII files with SAS/SPSS format statements. Zipped format is available to facilitate quicker downloading. Selected files are available free of charge from the AHRQ Clearinghouse.

Currently, the MEPS-HC data release schedule is in a steady state. The Use File is released each May, the Point-in-Time File each July, and the Expenditure File each November.



## AHRQ/CFACT Data Center

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- **Provides researchers access to non-public use MEPS data (except directly identifiable information)**
- **Mode of data analysis**
  - **on secure LAN at AHRQ in Rockville, Maryland**
  - **task order agreement with data contractor**
  - **combinations of both**

For reasons of confidentiality, some of the MEPS data collected cannot be publicly released. To allow outside researchers access to this data, AHRQ has established an on-site data center within the Center for Financing, Access, and Cost Trends (CFACT). The AHRQ/CFACT data center is located in Rockville, Maryland. It provides researchers with a secure physical space to access nonpublic use MEPS data. Data Center researchers conduct their own analyses on stand-alone PCs with minimal assistance from AHRQ staff.



## **AHRQ/CFACT Data Center Procedures**

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- **Researcher may bring data in, but not out.**
- **Researcher has access only to data needed for approved project.**
- **All tabular data will be reviewed for confidentiality before release from Data Center.**
- **Only approved tables can leave the Data Center.**
- **Data Center will store data files, foreign merge files, and all outputs needed for replication.**



## **AHRQ/CFACT Data Center Facilities**

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- **Secure room**
- **Terminal connected to secure LAN**
- **Software available:**
  - **SAS, STATA, GAUSS, Stat Transfer, SUDAAN, Limdep, and EQS**
  - **others upon request**
- **Limited staff support by people who know**
  - **the data**
  - **the confidentiality issues**
  - **the software**



## **AHRQ/CFACT Data Center Application and Review Process**

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- **Application procedures are available on the MEPS Web site.**
- **Submit proposal to Data Center coordinator.**
- **Review within one week for feasibility, and data availability.**
- **Institutional Review Board (IRB) review required.**



## **AHRQ/CFACT Data Center Fees**

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- **User fee of \$150.00 for approved projects to cover technical assistance, simple file construction, and/or up to two hours of programming support from data contractor.**
- **Additional programming support available from an AHRQ contractor at a cost of \$80.00 per hour.**
- **User fee waived for full-time students.**



## **AHRQ/CFACT Data Center Limited Remote Access**

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- **Once a user has an established Data Center project and has worked on site to develop and debug programs, jobs may be submitted to the AHRQ/CFACT Data Center supervisor to run.**
- **Output will be reviewed for confidentiality and mailed to the user.**



## **Confidential Data Available for AHRQ/CFACT Data Center Projects**

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- **1996 Nursing Home Data from MEPS-NHC**
- **Linked MEPS-HC and Secondary Data**
  - full geo-coding for 1996, 1997, and 2000
  - FIPS codes for other years
- **Selected Medical Provider Component data**





## **Confidential Data Available for Projects in AHRQ/CFACT Data Center**

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- **Fully specified industry/occupation codes**
- **Imputed NDC codes**
- **Continuous poverty measure**
- **Linked MEPS Household Component (HC)  
and Insurance Component (IC) data**